Someone you know

A Publication by Ground Zero
P.O. Box 1982, Colorado Springs, CO 80901

HOMOSEXUALITY IN THE WORKPLACE

"Work is the refuge of people who have nothing better to do." **-Oscar Wilde**

Whether we like it or not, most of us have to work. Our occupations present a certain dilemma: They are our bondage, but they give us much of our identity and allow us to be more than just bystanders in somebody else's world.

My present position as a computer technician for a local marketing firm is not necessarily the job I've always envisioned myself in (Itinerant D.J.'s specializing in ABBA classics don't make the big bucks), but it is engaging and I work with some genuinely nice people. The daily challenges of the workplace are shared by all; but I believe that there are perplexities unique to me as a gay male.

Many gays and lesbians face very real threats to their existence withing the workplace. Depending on the job environment, fears can vary from that of being stereotyped as the "office gay" to losing one's job. Gay men and women who work with children as teachers or social workers are particularly vulnerable to irrational and untrue characterizations of homosexuals as child molesters.

But, for some, the workplace also provides opportunities for productive dialogue. The value of these discussions, even if they may only occur with one or two close acquaintances, cannot be underestimated. A sincere expression of ideas from a gay or lesbian co-worker can stimulate positive changes in ways not even anticipated.

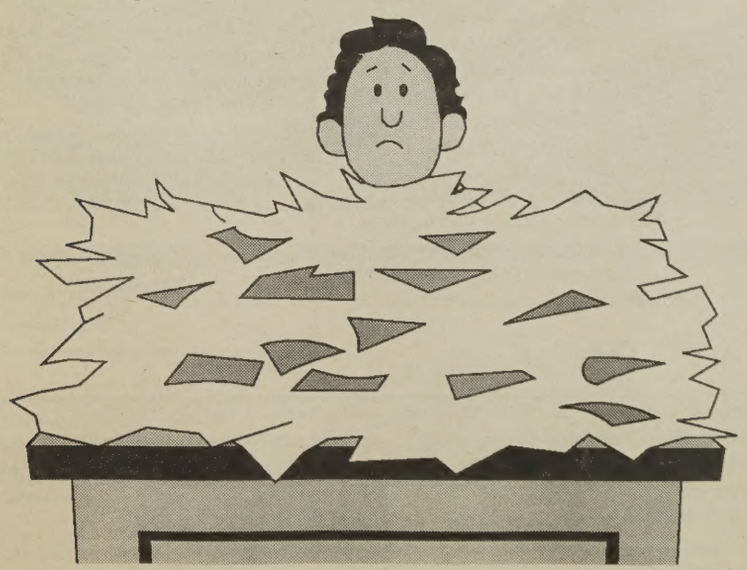
Finally, here are a few general principles that might be used to create your own workplace ethic:

--Work is work; to successfully fulfill the requirements of most jobs, it is important to keep our personal joys and struggles separate from the tasks facing us. We have no right to ask our coworkers to be involved in our personal lives.

--If you choose to be open about your sexuality, be confident in your own identity. Remember, that in the minds of many, whether fair or not, you have made yourself a representative of all gay and lesbian people.

--Be questioning of other people's concerns or questions, patient perseverance, though at times frustrating, is the best way to overcome confusion and ignorance.

- author requests to remain anonymous



THE HARDEST JOB OF ALL

by Julie Cooper

Often, one of the hardest things to do is to keep an important secret, sometimes about someone else, especially about yourself. Worse yet is being forced to lie about yourself to keep that secret covered up, hidden away so no one finds it out.

The lies begin to eat at you, you have to remember each lie you told so as not to be discover or caught lying. The stress builds, did you slip up? Why did your co-worker ask THAT question? •What did I tell them last week? Last month? Last year?•The extensive energy and time it take to keep up that facade begins to affect every aspect of your life: your work performance, your relationships, your self esteem.

You begin to wonder if it's all worth it, if you should just spit it out, get it over with, and brace yourself for the repercussions, the harassment, the possible loss of your job.

Then you think about your family, your children, your partner, and you think no, I have to be strong, for my career, for my relationship, especially for my children. But it continues to gnaw at your soul, you see its effect on the people you love, on your self. Is it really worth it? Why can't I just be who I am? Why is that such a crime? Can I keep this up much longer?

No one knows or understands this struggle more the lesbian or gay person on the job.

Imagine for a moment walking out your front door each morning and having to become a completely different person, to leave everything and everyone you love completely behind, for to acknowledge them in the workplace could mean termination.

It's Monday morning. You walk into work and everyone is talking freely about their weekends: the romantic get-aways, the romp in the park with the kids, the date that just might be that special someone. You ache to join in the conversation, share you personal stories with these people with whom you spend almost a quarter of your life. But, for the sake of you job, career, your family, you keep quiet. Everywhere you walk, on every desk, are loving gifts of flowers or photographs of wives, husbands and children smiling at you, almost taunting you, because you can't afford to put a picture of the person you love most on your desk, or receive flowers on Valentine's Day or your birthday to remind you of the love shared in your life. You nurture a plant where a photograph or delivered flowers should be.

Then someone asks the deadly question: "How was YOUR weekend?" You cringe, then slip into that lonely, deceitful facade you hate, but know all too well. You've learned how to deal with these questions, becoming quite good at changing pronouns, playing the lonely work-aholic, or spinning the question back: "Same old same old, how was yours?"

At lunch you hear everyone talking about current events of their choice, what's happening in the world, and sharing the anger or excitement about something going on somewhere. You're angry about the woman who had her child taken from her by the courts. But you can't say anything because that woman was a lesbian. *Why are you defending her so strongly? Is there something about you that we don't know?*

Then the unthinkable happens. The wife/husband of someone at work is sick or injured, they tell the boss and, of course they can go take care of this person they love. But the person you love can't even call you at work, nor can you call her, or if you do, you have to pretend this person is just a friend. You can't say "I love you" to close the conversation, you couldn't even leave work if this person was sick or injured.

Imagine having to hide, to lie, to pretend every moment on the job for fear of being "found out" and loosing the job you love, the one at which you've worked so hard.

Imagine hearing words meant to describe you, being spoken in anger, meant to hurt, meant to insult, meant to dehumanize, and you can't denounce those hateful words or defend those they were meant destroy. Faggot. Nigger. Whore. Breeder. Dyke. Spick. Kike. White-trash.

Someone You Know, someone you love, faces this dilemma, this harassment, every day.

Gays and lesbians, and many other marginalized human groups, who are not fortunate enough to work at the handful of businesses that have diversity policies, must deal with this struggle every single day.

Imagine the energy it would take to keep up a facade for a day, a year, your entire life, energy that should be spent doing the best job possible, on being the best person you can be. Imagine the strain on work relations lying about your self, constantly having to watch what you say and how you say it. Imagine the pain eating at you, robbing you of your focus, your energy, your life.

Imagine. Then understand. Let your friends and co-workers know that you are supportive and care by denouncing "queer" jokes or any offensive language directed at any minority or human group.

Let's delight in each other's uniquenesses. We need to be building each other up, not cutting each other down.

Walk a mile, or a day, in a gay or lesbian person's shoes...and understand what it's like to have the hardest job of all.

In the spirit of the Vernal Equinox, Easter and Mother Earth bringing forth new life this season, we offer you the prose below. It's time to come out of our hiding places, our closets, and we all have them, and marvel at the wonder of creation unfolding around us, in ourselves and in each other.
A warm and wonderful Spring to all of you.

GOING WITHIN, COMING OUT

-by Bill Huesbch,
Catholic Theologian
(condensed for this publication)

I know everyone has heard of families
not that long ago,
where a sister or brother
was disowned for marrying
the wrong person:
divorced,
racially wrong,
non-Catholic,
or non-something!
I know we all know families,
maybe we are such a family,
where the decision on birth control
forced us to choose:
Will we be in or out of the church?
I know we have heard of families,
many of them,
where a gay or lesbian child
is such a source of shame
and dishonor
that the child is banished.
Such banishment of gay or
lesbian children
is the question
we want to treat here for a moment.
The banishment might be literally
and order not to return home
until "your sinful lifestyle
changes..."
or simply an emotional distance,
a barrier to talking about it,
or to meeting friends,
or lovers.
Whatever form it takes,
gay men and lesbians,
stand on the edge of another frontier
of human openness and struggle,
but they receive no blessing
and only a curse
from the Community of Jesus today
from the official church.
There's a story
in one of the gospels
which can help us discern
what Jesus' regard
might have been like
toward those bound up
by death-dealing attitudes and boundaries,
including gay and lesbian people today.

A FAMILIAR STORY

It's the story of Lazarus
in chapter 11 of John.
The story begins
with Jesus and his friends
going off to an out of the way place
to rest.
The church authorities of his day
and age
were on Jesus' case
because he taught
what they refuse to see.
There was talk of "doing him in,"
of "getting rid of him..."
This talk hadn't been lost on him
- or on his friends,
who were probably grateful
for this chance
to stay out of sight for a while.
But while he was there
-in his hiding place-
word came to him that a friend was
sick:
Lazarus.
He decided to return to Judea,
to Bethany,
where Lazarus had lived...
...and now had died.
He knew he would be
facing terrible dangers
if he went.
But he also knew he had no choice:
Lazarus would be a sign for all
that Jesus can set anyone free,
even those in tombs,
even those bound up for death.
So he went,
over the objections of his followers,
and maybe even
despite his own best judgement.
His disciples tried to stop him
from going
because they knew the dangers were
real.
They didn't want to go through this with
him,
didn't want to be hurt themselves.
didn't want the risks,
the public trials,
the pain.
"The ones who walk in the light,"
he told his worried friends,
"do not stumble.
It's only the ones who remain in the dark
who need to worry
about falling down."
I'm not sure this convinced them all
but off they went,
returning to Bethany,
looking for Lazarus
now dead four days
and buried in his tomb.

THE LAZARUS IN EACH OF US

In this story,
Lazarus takes the part of all of us
who live "tomb lives,"
all who are bound up and kept out of
sight.
This isn't so much a story
about a dead man being restored
as about a spiritually dead
coming to life in Christ.
This is a story
about binding up and letting go free,
about having life
real life,
true life.
It's about us when we come face to face
with death in life, with isolation
rejection, hiding,
fear, self-loathing
and hate.
All of us are Lazarus from time to time:
dead to life, bound up,
and buried in a tomb...
..or a "closet."
Gay and lesbian people
know what this means
in a profound way.
Like certain others in our time,
being gay or lesbian today
can involve a lot of hiding.
It can involve
a good deal of time spent bound up,
by attitudes of hate,
by stereotypes of style,
by the denial of love,
by the threats of violence.
To be openly gay or lesbian today
one must be steeled
for rejection, ridicule,
misunderstanding, and danger.
Even those who claim to represent Jesus,
participate in this and do so
in the name of God.
But Jesus' assurance is
that the truth will set us free,
that acknowledging and living
by the truth
by the Spirit of Truth,
ushers us into the Reign of God
announced here by Jesus himself.

And if you listen closely
to gay men and lesbians today,
you will hear the chorus:
"We are who we are."
They are supported in this by
psychologists, sociologists,
biologists, philosophers
and many theologians.
Gay men and lesbians
will tell you plainly
that their way of loving
comes as "naturally" to them
as straight men and women
understand their attractions.
Lesbians and gay men will tell you

that the truth is this:
sexuality is a gift from God
and homosexuality is one expression
of that gift.
That's the truth
that has set so many
lesbians and gay men
free at last.
That's the truth that has brought them
out of the closets of hiding,
out of the tombs.
And in this coming out,
gay men and lesbians and often say that
for the first time, it is now clear
how God touches us with eternal truth.
So Jesus' assurance is clear
when he calls to us
as he did to Lazarus:
"***Come out!***"
He isn't calling us out of our graves,
but out of our hiding
into the light.
He's calling us out of unfreedom
into freedom.
And, if that isn't clear enough,
if that doesn't make it obvious
that we are not made to live in closets
or tombs,
Jesus has something else to say.
As the one who had been buried
comes stumbling out of the dark,
still bound,
still tied up for death,
his hands and feet and face,
Jesus speaks to those around him:
"***Unbind him and let him go!***"

- Bill Huebsch, author,
A Radical Guide for Catholics, 1992

ANTI-GAY MARRIAGE BILL AWAITS GOVERNOR'S SIGNATURE

The anti-gay marriage bill, which legally defines marriage as a union between a man and woman only, passed the State Senate on Monday, March 10.

The bill, which would deny legal recognition of same-gendered marriage in Colorado, regardless of where the license was attained, is expected to be signed by Governor Romer as early as Friday.

You are encouraged to call the Governor's office to voice your opposition to this unfair and bias-motivated bill and ask him to veto it.

Office of the Governor
(303) 866-2471

For the civic-minded: the Colorado Springs City Council is seeking citizen volunteers to fill vacancies on six boards and commissions. Volunteers with specific qualifications are needed on the following boards and commissions: **City and County Commission on Children and Families**, one vacancy for a corporate management/human resources representative; **Fire Board of Appeals,** one representative of a large business; **Board of Review** (Regional Building Department), one building contractor A or B; **Mechanical Committee** (Regional Building Department), one building contractor, A, B, Or C and one journeyman plumber; **City/County Drainage Board**, one vacancy for a drainage engineer. ***Applications should be sent to: City Council, P.O. Box 1575, Colorado Springs, CO 80901. For more information, call Nancy Bramwell at 578-6600.***

FACTS AND BRIEFINGS

EARLY JUMP ON HATRED:
Efforts to combat bigotry must start early
Staff writer,
The San Diego Union-Tribune
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The most compelling - and most troubling - finding to emerge from a comprehensive report on hate crimes in San Diego County is that bigotry and intolerance are much bigger problems among young people than other age groups.

In fact, 53 percent of assailants identified in the study were 20 years old or younger. Only 13 percent were over 30. Less surprisingly, males were the perpetrators of fully 92 percent of the hate crimes in which arrests were made.

A revived Hate Crimes Registry established by the San Diego regional office of the Anti-Defamation League verified 478 incidents during a three-year period ending in December 1995. The targets singled out most often by he haters were African-Americans, accounting for 29 percent of the victims.

The next likeliest targets were gays and lesbians, who made up 21 percent of the victims, followed by whites at 16 percent, Latino at 14 percent and Jews at 6 percent.

A disturbing 13 percent of those arrested for acts of violence or intimidation were under age 16. Another 40 percent were between the ages of 16 and 20.

These number illustrate a pressing need for greater attention to the attitudes and values of teenagers because, as a group, they are much likelier to commit hate crimes than older persons.

The ADL study examined in commendable detail the data collected by law enforcement organizations throughout the county. But it did not attempt, based on the limited information, to reach sweeping conclusions about the causes or potential solutions to the problem.

The report should, however, stir critical thinking about the prevelance of bigotry in our increasingly diverse communities. For instance, is the susceptibility of teens to racially inspired hatred another dismaying manifestation of parental neglect and the decline of two parent families? Or is it simply a result of youthful rebellion against the values of tolerance and respect that parents, schools, churches and other institution see to instill?

Do young people learn intolerance at home? Or do the pick it up in schools, where tensions between students of different racial and ethnic backgrounds often run high? Does the continuing backlash against illegal immigration in California and across the country play a major role in fomenting hatred?

More study is needed to find answers to these questions. But what is already very plain is that parents and every institution in San Diego, and in every community across the country, that touches the lives of young people - schools, in particular - must help find solutions.

NEED FOR TOLERANCE AND UNDERSTANDING APPARENT
by Jesse Wayne Lord Johnson

Recently in the Chronicle it was claimed that "consensus is the rule of the majority." Nonsense. Consensus is not a rule but a right. It is a right of all humanity to an existence that is respected and give a place at the table. This belief stems from a tradition older that Christianity and incorporated by it. This involves the simple offering of kindness and hospitality to strangers. It is the story of Lot in the cities of the plain , as well as the story of the Good Samaritan. These are stories that speak to us about who we were...and who we might strive to become. The are the tales of bold, diligent actions which I think deserve more practice that the easy xenophobia preached by those claiming to know what is right for all. No matter how we decided to divide ourselves, the world will always remain more complex that our categories of bias. The nature of the world will always testify to this fact.

Diversity is a blessing, not a heresy.

To think of this diversity we could shrink the population of the earth to a village of precisely 100 people, with all the existing human ratios remaining the same.

It would look like this:

There would be 57 Asians, 21 Europeans, 14 Western Hemisphere people (both North and South Americans), and eight African-Americans. Seventy persons would be non-white, 30 would be white, 70 would be non-Christian and 30 would be Christian. Anywhere in this assortment, depending on whose study you use, there would be between 3 to 12 lesbians and gay men. Fifty percent of the entire world's wealth would be in the hands of only six people, and these six people would all be citizens of the United States. Seventy percent would be unable to read. Fifty would suffer from mal-nutrition, 80 would live in sub-standard housing and only one would have a university education.

When one considers our world from such an incredibly compressed perspective, the need for tolerance, compassion and understanding becomes glaringly apparent.

VOICES

"I have never met a genuine ex-gay, though I know dozens of miserable pretenders."
- Michael Busse, former "ex-gay" and co-founder of Exodus ministries, an organization that believed, and still does, that "homosexuals" can be converted to Heterosexuals. Busse now speaks to that falicy and impropriety, and to the lives shattered by this organization.

"Can you imagine having to pretend everyday of your life, to make ups stories and excuses, to feel guilty about who you are just because someone else may feel uncomfortable because of you?"
- Rabbi Peter Kessler, Baltimore Hebrew Congregation.

"We have to dare to be ourselves, however frightening or strange that self may be."
- Mary Sarton, Mrs Stevens Hears the Mermaids Singing, 1965

"If they come for me in the morning, they will come for you at night."
- Angela Davis, If They Come For Me in the Morning, 1971

"Every major horror of history was committed in the name of altruistic motive. Has any act of selfishness ever equalled the carnage perpetrated by the disciples of altruism?"
- Ayn Rand, author of The Fountainhead

"There are two kinds of stones, as everyone knows, one of which rolls."
- Amelia Earhart, 20 Hours:40 Minutes, 1928

"If you are going to hold someone down you're going to have to hold onto the other end of the chain. You are confined by your own repression."
- Toni Morrison, quoted in I Dream A World, 1989

"One of the signs of passing youth is the birth of a sense of fellowship with other human beings as we take our place among them."
- Virginia Woolf

"Over the last two years I learned that coming out means so much more that announcing your sexuality; it means learning at last to live for yourself."
- Jose Zuniga, 1995, Soldier of the Year, 1993

THINK THE FIGHT FOR LESBIAN AND GAY EQUALITY ENDED WITH THE SUPREME COURT DECISION ON AMENDMENT 2?

THINK AGAIN

...THEN COME HEAR

CANDACE GINGRICH

SPEAK ON LESBIAN AND GAY EQUALITY

April 4, 1997
7:30 p.m.
special engagement at:
CENTENNIAL HALL
190 S. CASCADE
COLORADO SPRINGS, COLORADO 80903

Space is limited!
Reservations are requested.

There is no admission fee, but to reserve your seat, fill out the RSVP below and mail in today!
Reservations have priority seating.

For more information call Ground Zero at 635-6086.

Sponsored by Ground Zero and The Human Rights Campaign

Ms. Gingrich is the step-sister of U.S. Speaker of the House Newt Gingrich and author of the book, "The Accidental Activist." She will be in town with the Human Rights Campaign to talk about, among other topics, equality of lesbians and gays in employment.

YES! **Sign me up to hear *Candace Gingrich* at Centennial Hall on April 4, 1997 at 7:30 p.m.**

name(s)_____
address_____
phone (h)_____ **(w)**_____
reservations for how many?_____ ***(please* limit to immediate family: partner, friend, children)**

mail to: **Ground Zero attn: reservations**
P.O. Box 1982
Colorado Springs, CO 80901

Mission Statement

Dedicated to securing and maintaining basic civil rights for lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgendered citizens; and to unifying their participation in the community at large through education, coalition, and visibility.

Sustaining Member–Sponsors

Many individuals donated to the fund to support *Someone You Know*. Some chose to be ongoing sponsors on a monthly basis. They are:

D. Miller
Cynthia Heinicke
Ed and Gerda Fletcher

Foundation Support

The Needmor Fund is a Colorado-based foundation that has as its primary goal the empowerment of those individuals whose basic rights to justice and opportunity are systematically ignored or denied through the funding of grassroots, community-based organizations.

The Chinook Fund is a publicly supported alternative foundation established to provide grants and technical assistance to Colorado grassroots organizations working for progressive social change

The Colin Higgins Fund funds organizations seeking to effect progressive social change.

The Funding Exchange is a partnership of activists and donors who came together in 1970 to find new ways to support social movements. They coined the phrase "change, not charity" because they believe in the importance of tackling the root causes of poverty and injustice. Allies for Justice is one of their member groups.

The Gill Foundation is a Colorado-based private foundation funding gay, lesbian and bisexual organizations, AIDS organizations, social justice/ human rights advocacy organizations and activities in The Arts that educate about HIV/AIDS, gays, lesbians and bisexuals, and relationships between disenfranchised peoples.

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PFLAG

The Colorado Springs Chapter of PFLAG is a non-profit, community-based organization not affiliated with any ethnic, religious, educational, counseling, business or political group.

PFLAG promotes the health and well being of gay, lesbian and bisexual persons, their family and friends, through support to cope with an adverse society; education, to enlighten an ill-informed public; and advocacy, to end discrimination and to secure equal rights. **Meets 2nd Wed of each month, 6:30pm social, 7:00pm meeting time. Call 575-8658 for information.**

Someone You Know is underwritten in part by
Coors Brewing Company

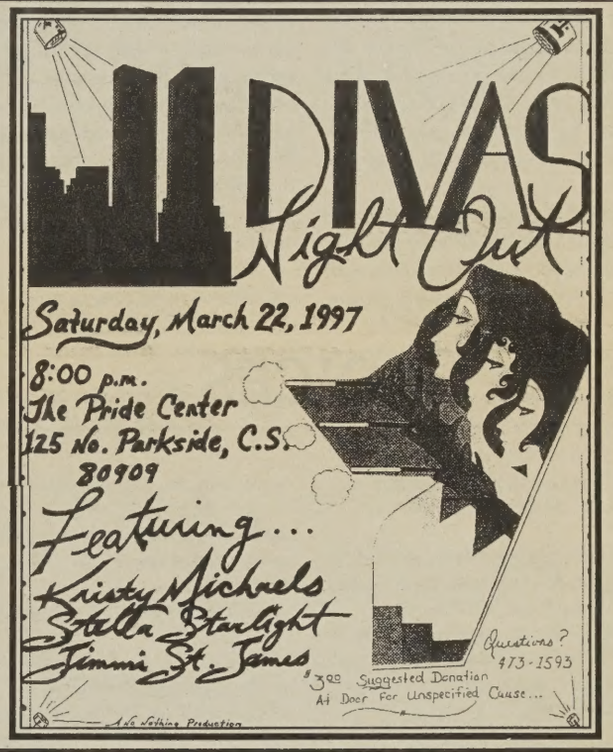
Coors

If you or your business is interested in underwriting this insert, please call Ground Zero at 635-6086

WE'RE GOING TO CRIPPLE CREEK!!

Saturday, March 29, 1997

5:00 p.m.
Bus departs Pride Center
11:00 p.m.
Bus leaves Cripple Creek
Come join Ground Zero for an evening of fun and prizes!!
* free meal coupons!
* coupon book full of freebees!
* round trip luxury coach bus ride!
* only $20.00!
Space is limited!
Call Ground Zero and make your reservation today!
635-6086



Have you enjoyed reading *Someone You Know*?
Have you learned something new about yourself or others?
Have you been touched by the personal stories?
This will be the last *Someone You Know* for a while. We need your help NOW in order to keep this important outreach viable for future issues.
Please help with as much as you can!

YES! I want SYK to continue!! Count Me In!!

***I want to be a part of Ground Zero's project to counter the myths, lies and stereotypes by printing factual information and stories of about real gays and lesbians and issues in the four page Someone You Know inserted in* The Independent monthly. I am enclosing:**

- ☐ **A One Time Donation of $_____, or**
- ☐ **I want to be a Sustaining supporter in the amount of $_____per month. I have enclosed the first installment, or**
- ☐ **I want to be listed in the insert as a monthly sponsor at $_____ per month (minimum $25). Enclosed is my first Payment, bill me monthly, or,**
- ☐ **Charge my above contribution to my Visa Or Master Card. Sustaining pledges will be automatically charged on the tenth of each month.**

Card Number_____EXP. DATE_____

Name on Card_____Phone #_____

Street/Box_____City_____State____Zip_____